



WATERSHED NEWS

F O U N D A T I O N

OCTOBER 9, 2006

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FAYETTEVILLE: WATER PROVIDER, CITY FIND TRADE-OFF

By ROBERT J. SMITH Arkansas Democrat Gazette
Posted on October 9, 2006
URL: <http://www.nwanews.com/adg/News/169158/>

Fayetteville didn't want a stringent phosphorus limit at its sewer plant, so it promised to do something else to improve water quality.

The Beaver Water District, which supplies drinking water to Northwest Arkansas' four biggest cities, wanted the strict limit, fearing more phosphorus would flow into the White River and Beaver Lake.

The city and water provider struck a five-year deal.

Fayetteville agreed to hire a nationally recognized consultant to develop a nutrient-reduction plan, figuring it might result in less phosphorus reaching the water. And the water district agreed not to push for a stricter phosphorus limit on the sewer plant.

The agreement takes a page from "nutrient-trading" programs. Nutrient-trading is when one source of phosphorus or another nutrient is allowed to keep producing it at the same level if it pays to remove the same nutrient in some other way from the watershed.

Several programs across the nation allow cities to leave their sewer plants operating as is, but only if they pay farmers to change their practices in a way that keeps nutrients out of lakes and streams.

In Fayetteville, the city promised to focus on removing phosphorus from urban nutrient producers like construction sites, septic tanks, homeowners' lawns and golf courses.

"I would say it's similar to nutrient-trading," said Martin Maner, the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality's water division chief. "We didn't think of it as that when we talked about it. We just wanted them to get together."

The most common trading programs involve air pollution. Utilities earn credits if they reduce smokestack emissions at greater levels than required by law. They then can sell the credits to utilities having difficulty meeting air quality requirements.

Nutrient trading or the selling of air pollution credits haven't been used in Arkansas, Maner said.

"I applaud what they've done up there," Maner said. "I'd like to see more of that."

As part of the agreement Fayetteville reached in March with the Beaver Water District, the city promised to hire a company to write a citywide nutrient reduction plan.

The plan will focus on cutting phosphorus that comes from nonpoint sources in town like the homeowners' lawns and construction sites.

City officials and a water district representative expected to review applications last week, but they delayed the session because just two companies wanted the job. The applicants were EGIS Environmental Consulting of Bentonville and Sprenkle and Associates of Monett, Mo.

"We need a bigger pool of applicants," said David Jurgens, the city's water and wastewater director.

The compromise came about because Fayetteville is expanding its sewer system.

The city treats about 12 million gallons of sewage a day at the Paul Noland plant in eastern Fayetteville, with 6 million gallons then piped to the Illinois River and 6 million gallons put in the White River.

A new westside treatment plant, scheduled to begin operations in 2008, will handle sewage in the Illinois River watershed. This initially would reduce the amount of sewage treated at the Noland plant, but the discharge would increase as the city's population grows. All of it would stay in the White River watershed. The city already had a permit to discharge 1 milligram of phosphorus in each liter of treated sewage. The water district feared increases in how much sewage is discharged in the White River watershed would increase phosphorus in Beaver Lake.

The district's original opposition came because phosphorus in rivers and lakes can degrade water quality. The water district pulls its water from Beaver Lake, which is part of the White River, and it's interested in the longterm preservation of the lake's water quality, said Alan Fortenberry, the district's chief executive officer.

To end up with the same volume, Fayetteville's permitted concentration needed to be reduced to 0.5 milligrams of phosphorus, Fortenberry said.

"If the lake is nutrient-limited, you've got to restrict the number of pounds," Fortenberry said.

In the agreement reached in March, Fayetteville promised to discharge 0.5 milligrams even though the permit remained at 1 milligram. Having the higher number helps the city avoid environmental fines if it fails to achieve the goal, Jurgens said.

Fayetteville also agreed to hire a consultant to write the nutrient reduction plan.

The consultant's job will include reviewing city ordinances to see if they can be changed to better control phosphorus from nonpoint sources.

The agreement also asks the consultant to determine if floodways in the city can be used as riparian buffer easements. Riparian buffers are bands of trees, shrubs or grass adjacent to lakes and streams meant to filter stormwater as it flows into lakes and streams.

The city agreed to spend \$ 200, 000 annually to implement the consultant's recommendations, Jurgens said.

J. D. Strong, chief of staff for Oklahoma Secretary of Environment Miles Tolbert, said he didn't think nutrient trading agreements would be useful in the Illinois River watershed. The watershed is in portions of both states, and Oklahoma wants Northwest Arkansas companies, farmers and cities to reduce the phosphorus discharged into the river.

Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson last year sued eight poultry companies with operations in Arkansas, accusing them in a federal lawsuit of polluting the watershed with poultry litter.

Segments of the Illinois River are considered impaired. "The nutrient trading idea has merit, but it depends on the watershed you are talking about," Strong said. "If you can get as much nutrient reduction as you need to achieve by putting more money into nonpoint controls, why not do it? But it probably has the most utility in watersheds that are not impaired. If it's impaired, you don't have room to trade."

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TAX HIKES COMING DUE IN NEWTON COUNTY

By Jeff Lehr The Joplin Globe

Posted on October 9, 2006

URL: http://www.joplinglobe.com/local/local_story_281234605

NEOSHO, Mo. - Local property-tax bills will be mailed out Nov. 1 in Newton County, and they carry the potential to draw gasps from property owners in certain pockets of the county.

Voters approved property-tax increases in five of the county's taxing districts in 2006: the Goodman and Redings Mill fire districts, the Neosho and McDonald County school districts, and the Joplin library district.

"From a collector's standpoint, I'm expecting to field a lot of questions about why people's tax bills have increased," said County Collector Jim Otey.

Many Newton County residents will be getting higher tax bills, Otey said. How much higher depends on where they live.

Some will be paying more for both public education and fire protection, he said. He said it is not unusual for residents to approve a tax increase and yet be surprised by its impact when their tax bill arrives.

"It's kind of like sticker shock," Otey said.

The group facing the steepest increase in the county lives in both the Neosho R-5 School District and the Redings Mill Fire District. The taxes have gone up 71 cents per \$100 assessed valuation, which computes to a tax hike of \$107.92 for a property with a market value of \$80,000.

Some Newton County property owners will see no local property-tax increase. Residents of Diamond, Granby and Seneca are examples. Joplin residents have only the library tax increase of 15 cents per \$100 assessed valuation to absorb.

The tax bills will be arriving just before the Nov. 7 election, in which Newton County voters are being asked to approve two more proposals calling for property-tax increases.

The Newton County Health Department is seeking a tax increase of 7 cents per \$100 assessed valuation to begin monitoring and testing county watersheds for health hazards and infectious diseases. The department currently operates on a levy of 5 cents, and a variety of state funds, grants and fees.

The Seneca R-7 School District is seeking a 59-cent levy increase to pay for construction of a new high school. The \$9 million proposal seeks to alleviate overcrowding in Seneca schools.

Both propositions could prove tough to sell to voters coming on the heels of other property-tax increases in 2006, although the increases proposed on the ballot would not affect local tax bills until next year.

Joe Layton, Seneca's superintendent of schools, acknowledged that the Redings Mill fire protection tax increase and the proposed Health Department increase could hurt the school district's chances of getting its proposal passed. He said that's unfortunate because the district's students sorely need new school space.

"I would hope people would see through the problem of increased levies and not want to punish our children because of increases for the fire district or the Health Department," Layton said.

Layton said the school board has tried to minimize the property-tax impact by seeking \$3 million in interest-free federal funds to pay for a third of the project. The remainder of the \$9 million would come from a bond issue to be paid off with tax revenues.

If both propositions pass, Newton County residents who live in the Seneca School District and the Redings Mill Fire District will have seen their local property taxes go up by \$1.01 per \$100 assessed valuation over the two-year period. For the owner of an \$80,000 property, that translates to a \$153.52 increase on the 2007 tax bill over what was paid in local school, fire protection and county health taxes in 2005.

Tax base

Joe Layton, superintendent of schools in Seneca, said property levies are inherently unfair in that the more populous and wealthy a district is, the easier it is to build with a relatively low levy increase. He said the Seneca School District doesn't have the tax base to accomplish a school construction plan without a sizable tax increase.

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FIRST CHALLENGED CAMPAIGN IN COUNTY FOR WATER BOARD SEAT

By Michelle Burhenn The Morning News

Posted on October 6, 2006

URL: <http://www.nwaonline.net/articles/2006/10/07/news/100606bzbeaverelection.txt>

BENTONVILLE -- For the first time since its inception, Benton County has a campaign for a seat on the Beaver Water District Board.

W. Herb Hawkins of Avoca is challenging Hardy "Casey" Croxton Jr. for his seat of the board of directors. Croxton has held the seat since 2000 when his father, Hardy Croxton Sr., retired from the board after serving since the district's creation.

Hawkins said he isn't looking to make trouble, but he thinks having a campaign in Benton County will raise awareness for a board that he said "seems ripe for a change."

The board of directors has six members, three from Benton County and three from Washington County. They are elected to six-year terms. One at-large board member from each county is elected every two years. The district was formed in 1957, and Benton County hasn't had a contested race since.

In Washington County, Earvel Fraley is challenging Christopher Weiser for his seat. Croxton said he wasn't surprised to have a challenger because of the controversial watershed ordinance the board backed earlier this year. But people need to realize that the board is not out to zone or take their land, as many perceive. The watershed ordinance, now tabled, would have established concentric circles around the lake, each zone with different restrictions on land use. The ordinance also called for prohibition of development inside riparian buffers, or land within 150 feet of streams, tributaries and dry creek beds inside the watershed.

Hawkins said he has the backing of the Northwest Property Rights Association, the chief opponent of the watershed ordinance. The association helped him gather the 50 signatures needed to register as a candidate.

He said he first considered running for justice of the peace. But he moved out of District 1, and he didn't feel comfortable running in his new district. Then he turned his attention to the Beaver Water District, he said.

"The Beaver Water District is a public entity, but no one seems to know anything about it," said Hawkins, who is a proponent of term limits. "To get some awareness, it needs to be contested a little bit."

Hawkins said he thinks the board crossed the line when it hired a consultant to research what became the watershed ordinance. He said the utility board should stick to the basics -- ensuring cheap rates and safe water.

Croxtan defended the board's action, saying it is the board's job to make sure it protects Beaver Lake and the district stays ahead of demand.

"One of my concerns is how we leave this resource for our kids and our kids' kids in future generations," he said. "I think it is going to take a lot of people sitting down together with different points of view to decide what we can do to protect the watershed."

He said the board is now focusing on how to handle the growth west of Interstate 540.

Walter Turnbow of Springdale defended the board members' longevity. He retired from the board July 1 after serving 29 years.

"I feel like when an organization is doing a good job, it's not necessary for turnover," he said.

Hardy "Casey" Croxtan Jr.

(incumbent)

Age: 50

Residence: Rogers

Occupation: Attorney, part-time municipal judge for Pea Ridge

Education: Bachelor's degree in political science and law degree, both from University of Arkansas; studied engineering

Family: Divorced, two children

Political Experience: Beaver Water District board member since 2000

W. Herb Hawkins

Age: 52

Residence: Avoca

Occupation: Small-business owner

Education: Bachelor of science degree in chemistry from Oklahoma State University; master of business administration from University of Arkansas

Family: Wife, Loretta; three children.

Political Experience: Avoca alderman-elect.

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POLL: STATE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS ON TRACK

By James Jefferson Arkansas News Bureau

Posted on October 8, 2006

URL: <http://www.arkansasnews.com/archive/2006/10/08/News/337976.html>

LITTLE ROCK - A majority of Arkansans believe the state is going in the right direction in ensuring a healthy environment but the federal government is doing too little to protect natural resources, results of a new poll show.

Also, nearly two-thirds of respondents said improving the environment does not have to conflict with economic growth, according to the poll commissioned by the Arkansas News Bureau-Stephens Media.

Opinion Research Associates of Little Rock survey 500 registered voters by telephone Sept. 26-30, and the poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

The results showed 59 percent of respondents said Arkansas is going in the right direction on protecting the environment, 22 percent said the state is going in the wrong direction and 19 percent didn't know, were undecided or did not respond.

Conversely, 53 percent said the federal government is doing too little toward environmental protection, 32 percent said the government's efforts are about right and 6 percent said the feds are doing too much. Eight percent were undecided.

Questioned about their views on the affect of economic growth on the environment, 68 percent said the two need not conflict. Twenty-one percent said improving the environment conflicts with improving the economy and 12 percent were undecided.

Gov. Mike Huckabee said Arkansas' commitment to the environment was evident in Amendment 75, passed by voters in 1996, earmarking portions from a one-eighth-cent conservation tax to state parks and the Game and Fish Commission.

"Our passage of Amendment 75 shows the commitment of our people to protect our natural resources, but we need to be vigilant in keeping the Natural State natural," the governor said.

The chief of Arkansas' environmental agency said the poll results were encouraging, both on the state's environmental protection initiatives and efforts to mesh natural preservation and economic development.

"We, as the premier environmental agency for the state, have felt and I have said that economic development and environmental protection can work together and need not be adversarial," said Marcus Devine, director of the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality.

The state has worked with many existing industries and prospective ones to safeguard the environment while promoting economic growth, Devine said. He noted, for example, his agency's role as state officials discussed with Hino Motors the possibility of locating a manufacturing plant in eastern Arkansas.

"One of their key issues was environmental compliance. ADEQ was brought in early to discuss environmental and permitting issues," Devine said. "We worked hand-in-hand to move the permit process forward. They were interested in complying with all environmental regulations."

The company is to hold the grand opening of its 400,000-square-foot manufacturing plant Tuesday in Marion. The facility is expected to employ 300 people in its first year of producing parts and components for Toyota vehicles.

Environmentalist David Carruth said he, too, was heartened by the poll numbers, but not the numbers showing not everyone is pleased with the state's stewardship of the environment.

"That tells me that the people of Arkansas sense something seems maybe OK, but also that seems amiss," said Carruth, president of the Arkansas Wildlife Federation.

"We are turning in a direction that is not the right direction. I don't think we've turned far enough for people to see and understand what's happening. There's always a lag time between when the state positions itself and (when) the public is cognizant of the ramifications."

While state agencies for several years have voted to protect the state's streams, recent consideration of changes in state regulations regarding Extraordinary Resource Waters threaten to erode protections, he said.

The Wildlife Federation is fighting a court battle to halt the \$319 million Grand Prairie irrigation project in eastern Arkansas involving construction of an intricate system of canals and piping to bring as much as 115 billion gallons of water a day from the White River to 1,000 Grand Prairie farmers.

Environmentalists have challenged the project on several fronts, including their contention that construction would harm the habitat of the recently rediscovered ivory-billed woodpecker.

A federal judge has halted part of the project and ordered further study of the danger to the rare bird, and state legislators have requested an update on the cost of the project, \$15 million of which already has been borne by the state.

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AFTER THE STORM: WHAT IS LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT?

By VAN BANKS The Benton County Daily Record
Posted on October 8, 2006
URL: <http://www.nwanews.com/bcdr/Agriculture/40626/>

Low Impact Development is an innovative storm-water management approach with a basic principle that is modeled after nature. LID manages rainfall at the source, using uniformly distributed small-scale controls. LID's goal is to follow a site's original hydrology or drainage by using designs that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate and detain runoff close to its source. Designs are based on the premise that storm-water management should not be seen as purely storm-water disposal.

Instead of conveying and managing / treating storm water in large, costly end-of-pipe facilities at the bottom of drainage areas, LID addresses storm water through small, cost-effective landscape features at the lot level. These landscape features, known as Integrated Management Practices, are the building blocks of LID.

Almost all components of the urban environment have the potential to serve as an IMP. This includes not only open space, but also rooftops, streetscapes, parking lots, sidewalks and medians. LID is a versatile approach that can be applied equally well to new development, urban retrofits and redevelopment / revitalization projects.

Development of LID principles began with the introduction of bioretention technology in the mid-1980 s. LID was pioneered to help address the growing economic and environmental limitations of conventional storm-water management practices.

LID allows for greater development potential with less environmental impacts through the use of innovative designs and advanced technologies to achieve better balance between conservation, growth, ecosystem protection and public health / quality of life. Today, bioretention is just one LID technique available to users. Other techniques, such as permeable pavers, tree-box planters and disconnected downspouts, are all available to help users control pollutants, reduce runoff volume, manage runoff timing and address a number of other ecological concerns.

LID has numerous benefits and advantages over conventional storm-water management approaches. In short, it is more environmentally sound and a more economically sustainable approach to addressing the adverse impacts of urbanization. By managing runoff close to its source through intelligent site design, LID can enhance the local environment, protect public health and improve community livability, all while saving developers and local governments money. The need for such an approach has never been greater for northwest Arkansas with its rapid land development. Storm-water programs require that a wide array of complex and challenging ecosystem and humanhealth-protection goals be addressed. Many of these goals are not being met by conventional storm-water management technology, and communities are struggling with the economic reality of funding aging and ever-expanding storm-water infrastructure. The challenge of how to restore stream quality in watersheds that have already been densely developed is even more challenging. LID provides the key in its emphasis on controlling or at least minimizing the changes to the local hydrologic cycle or regime.

••• Van Banks is a storm-water specialist with the University of Arkansas ' Cooperative Extension Services. His column appears on Sundays. Call him at (479) 271-1060 or e-mail vbanks @ uaex. edu.

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GRANT HELPS PRODUCER TO BRANCH OUT

By Mike Surbrugg The Joplin Globe

Posted on October 8, 2006

URL: http://www.joplinglobe.com/local/local_story_281013024

MARIONVILLE, Mo. - In 2003, Rick Hopkins, of Marionville, received a \$6,000 grant from The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program to pay some costs to demonstrate how a small livestock producer could diversify.

For this project, that meant selecting a pasture to till and planting vegetables. At the end of the vegetable harvest, he sowed improved forages on the site.

"It works great. I wish more people from this part of the state would file applications for grants," he said.

He learned growing vegetables means using irrigation. He has since cut back and has vegetables closer to the house to water with a soaker hose.

The rows of pasture vegetables, such as lettuce, could have some healthy plants with no insect damage and others devoured by insects.

He believes it could be caused by different soil types and insects taking out the weaker plants. "Planting more seed is cheaper than chemicals to control insects," he said.

He is among producers who plant turnips for livestock grazing. This spring he found volunteer turnips growing where they had been planted last year. Hopkins sold the turnips for \$200 at a farmers' market.

Hopkins has 60 head of ewes that like his more than five acres of Red River crab grass. Into this forage, he has planted wheat, oats, turnips and red clover.

He has 140 laying hens that struggle to lay enough brown eggs to meet customer demand. He sells eggs at the farm, health-food stores, a restaurant and a farmers' market.

There are also 75 ducks on the farm that he got in a trade for chickens. He has found a market for duck eggs. His comment: "Try 'em; you'll like them."

He gets \$3 a dozen for chicken or duck eggs. Hopkins also sells grass-fed beef.
Hopkins: (417) 258-2394.

Mike Surbrugg is the Globe farm editor.

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DEADLINE MARKED FOR RESEARCH GRANTS

From Staff Reports The Joplin Globe
Posted on October 8, 2006
URL: http://www.joplinglobe.com/local/local_story_281012904

COLUMBIA, Mo. - The deadline is Dec. 1 to submit proposals to receive on-farm research grants of \$6,000 to \$18,000.

Money comes from the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, or SARE, program that has an office in Columbia.

Last year, SARE received 182 proposals and funded 47 grants totaling \$414,489. None of the 11 approved for Missouri went to Southwest Missouri, said Debi Kelly, project manager for Missouri Alternatives Center in Columbia.

The North Central SARE region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Money is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and projects must be completed in 21 months.

Jose Garcia, coordinator for community food systems and sustainable agriculture at the University of Missouri, said grants are awarded based on an applicant's ability to show profitability potential, whether the project might benefit the community and whether it is environmentally sound.

People seeking information and applications can contact Garcia at (573) 884-3794 or GarciaJL@missouri.edu.

Debi Kelly can be reached at 1-800-433-3704 or (573) 882-1905.

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STATE GRANTS ADDRESS NEED TO KEEP THE BAY CLEAN

Reporting: Meteorologist Tim Williams

Wjz.com

Posted on October 8, 2006

URL: http://wjz.com/local/local_story_281175403.html

(Chesapeake Bay Trust) On Sunday the Chesapeake Bay Trust announced the results of its Pioneer Grants initiative, a groundbreaking program designed to improve the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

At a press conference this morning on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Congressman Wayne T. Gilchrest, Department of Agriculture Secretary Lewis R. Riley, Chesapeake Bay Trust leadership, and Pioneer grant recipients all gathered to hear the announcement of \$600,000 in grants, which is earmarked to fund six innovative projects throughout Maryland.

As **WJZ's Tim Williams** reports, each of these projects, which range in scope and geographic location, focus on two areas: promoting best practices for agricultural management and new approaches to reduce the water quality impact of new development.

"Today the people of Maryland have taken a big step forward to help our great Chesapeake Bay," said Congressman Gilchrest. "By implementing new techniques and innovative approaches to develop land and control storm water run off, and by striving to manage agricultural waste before it enters our waterways, we are able to address water quality issues while maintaining the economic viability of our local farms."

Three of the Pioneer grant awards given out today focus on projects on Maryland's Eastern Shore, including a grant for implementing a new method for managing poultry manure. This technique has the potential to reduce the volume of poultry litter in chicken houses and its impacts on water quality.

Perdue Farms, the largest chicken producer in the Eastern United States, has lent its support to this project and attended today's event.

"Virtually each of the Trust's Pioneer grant projects lends an innovative approach to manage waste more efficiently, advance new agricultural markets and reduce nutrient run-off into the Bay," said Lewis R. Riley, secretary of the Department of Agriculture. "We are pleased to be a part of this program as we strive to enhance agriculture and improve the Chesapeake."

Grants also were awarded to the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science to reduce nutrient run-off from dairy farms, to the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension to implement irrigation sensor technology to reduce nutrients from nursery operations, and to the Maryland-Delaware Forage Council to market hay more aggressively as a product that has both economic value and large nutrient reduction capabilities.

The town of Denton also received a pioneer grant for its approach to apply innovative techniques to protect water quality in new land developments.

"The Trust's Pioneer Grants program is an approach to fund projects that seek to improve water quality and wildlife in the Bay," said David O'Neill, executive director of the Chesapeake Bay Trust. "These types of larger grant awards represent a major development in the Trust's grant making direction to focus on projects which educate the public and advance activities that have an immediate ecological benefit."

Since its inception, the Trust's Pioneer Grants program has awarded \$1.18 million in three years. For more information on the Chesapeake Bay Trust and its grants, visit www.cbtrust.org.

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